

MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES  
WILDLIFE DIVISION  
**RUFFED GROUSE AND AMERICAN WOODCOCK  
EARLY SEASON REPORT**

Early season reports from ruffed grouse and American woodcock cooperators allow biologists to quickly assess hunter success and local field conditions across the state of Michigan at the beginning of grouse season. This report is a summary response for September 15-18, 2004.

Cooperators returned 112 surveys and hunted 444.3 hours in 37 counties during the survey period. Respondents hunted most in Zone 2, followed by Zones 1 and 3. Zone 2 also reported the highest flush rates for both grouse and woodcock (Table 1). The individual county having at least 10 hours of hunting with greater than 2 flushes per hour for grouse was Lake (Table 2). Although woodcock season was not open during the survey period, cooperators were asked to also count woodcock flushes. Individual counties having at least 10 hours of hunting with greater than 2 flushes per hour for woodcock were Gladwin, Kalkaska, Lake, and Mason (Table 2).

Many respondents (66%) thought grouse populations were down or slightly down from last year in the areas that they hunted, with 23% reporting populations about the same as last year (Table 3). Nearly half (45%) of the respondents thought woodcock populations were the same as last year and 23% thought woodcock population levels were down or slightly down from last year (Table 3).

Many hunters commented that weather conditions were very hot for the opening of the season and that mast and food conditions were good this year.

Table 1. Ruffed Grouse and American woodcock flush rates by zone and year for September 15-18.

Zone	2003			2004		
	Hrs	Grouse/ Hour	Woodcock/ Hour	Hrs	Grouse/ Hour	Woodcock/ Hour
1	164.1	1.3	0.5	83.2	0.6	0.3
2	285.8	2.1	1.4	327.9	1.4	1.9
3	53.7	0.6	0.7	33.2	0.3	0.8
State	503.5	1.7	1.0	444.3	1.2	1.5

Table 3. Hunter opinions about ruffed grouse and American woodcock populations.

Trend	Ruffed Grouse		American Woodcock	
	2003	2004	2003	2004
Up	3%	7%	5%	16%
Slightly Up	18%	4%	11%	16%
Same	27%	23%	31%	45%
Slightly Down	23%	18%	20%	11%
Down	29%	48%	33%	12%

Table 2. Ruffed Grouse and American Woodcock flush rates by county for September 15-18, 2004

County	Hours	Grouse/Hour	Woodcock/ Hour
Alcona	13.0	0.5	1.8
Allegan	20.0	0.5	1.1
Alpena	3.0	2.3	1.0
Antrim	1.2	0.0	0.0
Arenac	3.0	1.0	2.7
Barry	3.5	0.0	0.0
Benzie	4.5	0.0	6.7
Charlevoix	0.8	2.7	0.0
Chippewa	2.5	1.2	2.0
Clare	16.3	0.9	1.8
Crawford	16.5	1.7	1.1
Delta	4.4	0.2	0.0
Dickinson	3.0	0.7	0.7
Emmet	6.0	4.5	0.0
Gladwin	59.1	1.0	2.9
Gogebic	13.0	0.2	0.0
Grand Traverse	22.8	1.9	0.5
Iron	11.5	0.2	0.4
Kalkaska	29.7	1.7	1.9
Keweenaw	1.8	0.0	0.0
Lake	24.8	2.0	2.0
Mackinac	33.4	0.8	0.4
Manistee	2.5	0.0	2.0
Mason	12.5	1.0	2.6
Mecosta	3.5	0.0	1.7
Missaukee	19.4	1.9	0.9
Montmorency	29.3	1.4	1.8
Muskegon	1.0	0.0	0.0
Newaygo	5.0	0.2	0.2
Oceana	2.0	1.0	1.0
Ontonagon	13.6	0.7	0.0
Osceola	5.0	1.6	0.2
Oscoda	24.1	1.2	1.9
Otsego	8.3	1.6	3.5
Presque Isle	5.3	0.2	1.5
Roscommon	8.5	2.2	0.6
Wexford	10.5	1.2	1.3